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EFFECTS OF ATOMIC RADIATION

Report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation

1. The United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation 1/ held its forty-first session at the Vienna International Centre from 15 to 19 June 1992. Mr. J. Maisin (Belgium), Mr. E. Létourneau (Canada) and Mr. L. Pinillos Ashton (Peru) served as Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur, respectively.

2. The Committee took note of General Assembly resolution 46/44 of 9 December 1991, by which, inter alia, the Assembly endorsed the plans for future activities and requested the Committee to continue the review of important problems on radiation doses and effects and to report thereon to the Assembly at its forty-seventh session. In particular, the Committee welcomed the reference to its scientific authority and the independence of its judgement. In this connection, the Committee concluded that the alternative arrangements for its secretariat suggested in General Assembly resolution 46/185 C of 20 December 1991 might well prejudice the perception of both its authority and its independence.

3. In technical discussions, the Committee considered recent information on sources of radiation, exposures and their effects. Those deliberations focused on review of documents prepared by the secretariat on subjects that the Committee had selected as the most important topics for further study. Those included: exposures from natural sources of radiation, man-made environmental radiation exposures, medical radiation exposures, occupational

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radiation exposures, effects of radiation on the natural environment, epidemiological study of radiation carcinogenesis, late deterministic radiation effects in children, radiation effects on the developing human brain, the influence of dose and dose rate on stochastic effects of radiation, mechanisms of radiation oncogenesis, hereditary effects of radiation, stimulatory and adaptive response to radiation in cells and organisms, and perception of risks from radiation and other sources. The Committee made suggestions for the further development of these topics, in particular pointing out new and additional information to be considered.

4. The Committee has made increased efforts to collect data on radiation exposures in countries worldwide in order to determine representative values and ranges of variations. All Member States of the United Nations were invited to respond to questionnaires distributed by the secretariat. While not entirely complete, the data should nevertheless allow more thorough analysis of natural, medical and occupational radiation exposures.

5. The Committee expressed the hope that Member States of the United Nations, the specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency would continue to assist in this work, especially by providing relevant information on the subjects of interest for the future programme of study, so that its deliberations could be based on the broadest and most up-to-date scientific and technical information.

6. The Committee intends to conclude its present evaluations of radiation sources and exposures and the reviews of biological subjects at its forty-second session and to submit a comprehensive report thereon to the General Assembly in 1993. The Committee is aware of the scientific interest in its deliberations and recognizes its responsibility to inform the widest possible audience of the sources, effects and risks of ionizing radiation. In the dissemination of its published report, the Committee wishes to contribute to better understanding of these subjects and to more accurate appreciation of the risks of present and potential radiation exposures.

7. The Committee elected Mr. E. Létourneau (Canada), Mr. L. Pinillos Ashton (Peru) and Mr. G. Bengtsson (Sweden) to serve as Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur, respectively, at its forty-second and forty-third sessions.

8. The Committee decided to hold its forty-second session at the Vienna International Centre from 17 to 28 May 1993.

Notes

1/ The terms of reference of the Committee, which was established by the General Assembly at its tenth session in 1955, are set out in resolution 913 (X) of 3 December 1955. The Committee was originally composed of the following Member States: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, France, India, Japan, Mexico, Sweden, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and

Notes (continued)

the United States of America. By resolution 3154 C (XXVIII) of 14 December 1973, the Assembly decided to increase the Committee's membership by up to five additional members, and the following Member States were appointed by the President of the Assembly in consultation with the Chairmen of the regional groups: Federal Republic of Germany, Indonesia, Peru, Poland and the Sudan. By its resolution 41/62 B of 3 December 1986, the Assembly decided to increase the membership to a maximum of 21 members and invited the People's Republic of China to become a member of the Committee.